NOTES AND RECORDS

Another Poisonous Octopus Bite.

Some years ago I recorded* a poisonous bite by the common Ringed Octopus *(Hapalochlaena maculosa)* which occurred in the Wollongong District of New South Wales. On that occasion, there was no *direct* evidence that the bite had been by the Octopus, though the circumstantial evidence was very strong. Confirmation of the poisonous nature of the bite of this small species has now been received, from Mrs. L. Masters, of Swansea, New South Wales (at the entrance to Lake Macquarie). Mrs. Masters reports that a young boy was bitten on the hand by one of these Octopus and shortly afterwards complained that he was not feeling well and went home. He drank a glass of water, but immediately complained to his parents that he was sick. He lost all co-ordination of his limbs, his speech became thick and he kept saying that he could not breathe. His skin became very cold and clammy and vomiting set in. At intervals there was spasmodic jerking of the limbs. These symptoms persisted for some hours. Gradually, after about eight hours, his speech returned to normal, then his arms recovered, but it was a couple of days before he could walk without assistance. These symptoms are almost exactly the same as those reported by the man bitten at Wollongong, and they emphasise the extreme virulence of the neurotoxin produced by this species. Extreme care should therefore be exercised when handling this Octopus, which may well be capable of inflicting a fatal bite on a susceptible individual.

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*McMichael, D. F., 1957, Proc. Roy. Zool. Soc. N.S.W., 1955-56, p. 110.